

Merritt Parkway, (Northbound) New Canaan
Service Station

HAER No. CT-133

Abutting the south side of the Merritt Parkway,
servicing the northbound lanes at the 14.2 mile mark
New Canaan
Fairfield County
Connecticut

HAER
CONN,
1-NECA,
3-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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MERRITT PARKWAY (NORTHBOUND) NEW CANAAN SERVICE STATION

HAER No. CT-133

Location: Abutting the south side of the Merritt Parkway, servicing the northbound lanes at the 14.2 mile mark; New Canaan, Fairfield County, Connecticut

UTM 18.627595.4552940
Quad: Norwalk South, Connecticut

Date of Construction: 1940

Engineer: Connecticut Highway Department

Architect: George Dunkelberger, Connecticut Highway Department

Contractor: S. C. Construction Company

Significance: The service stations of the Merritt illustrate the Connecticut Highway Department's policy of limiting private commercial development and conforming to aesthetic treatment sympathetic to a parkway setting. Built and owned by the state, these were, and continue to be, leased to private companies. Stylistically these Colonial Revival structures were influenced by the service stations of the Westchester County, New York, parkway system.

Description: Originally the Colonial Revival service station was a one-story building with side-gabled roofs over two rooms. A small room with a cross-gabled roof is located off the rear of the larger, west room. A flat-roofed, square addition at the east end is white brick. The exterior walls of the original building are red brick laid in a Flemish bond with white clapboard gables; the roof is covered with slate. A chimney occurs at the east end of the peak of the west roof. A wood dormer with a clock is centered in the west roof. The west room originally had a bay window, but two-thirds of the front wall has been removed and replaced with a glass and aluminum storefront. A glass door is placed at the east end of the front facade of the west room. The front facade of the east room and the west facade of the rear addition have two octagonal windows with white trim.

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The west room contains the cashier's booth, coolers, and food racks. The east room has a beverage bar and is the passageway to the addition that contains the public restrooms.

Originally the service station was located behind a semi-circular concrete pad with gasoline pumps in the middle. The current pumps are on a rectangular concrete pad with a low-pitched gabled canopy.

History:

Anticipating drastic fluctuations in directional traffic volume between the morning and evening rush hours, parkway planners decided that identical stations should be located directly opposite each other on the parkway. This way attendants could be shifted across the road during peak traffic periods. Although owned by the state, the business was originally leased to the Tide Water Associated Oil Company, which paid \$250 per month rent and 3.39 cents per gallon of gasoline sold.

This station has had several alterations through the years. In 1958 it was remodeled and a 900-square-foot addition was attached to the west side. At the same time the acceleration and deceleration lanes were lengthened and widened, the parking area was expanded. In 1988, the interior of the station was totally renovated and new pumps were installed.

Sources:

"Motorists Demand Fast Service at New Parkway Stations." National Petroleum News 30 October 1940: 35-37.

Contract Card File. Map File and Engineering Records Department, Connecticut Department of Transportation: Wethersfield, CT. This includes construction drawings, copies of which are in the HAER field records.

Historians:

Corinne Smith, HAER Engineer, and Todd Thibodeau, HABS/HAER Historian, August 1992.

For additional information on the Merritt Parkway and its history and structures, see HAER No. CT-63.